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C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENNA 001770

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/E AND EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/31/2015

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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN REACTION TO ETHIOPIAN POST-ELECTION PERIOD

REF: STATE 99185

Classified By: ECONOMIC-POLITICAL COUNSELOR GREGORY E. PHILLIPS. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

1. (SBU) EconPolCouns discussed reftel points on May 31 with Caroline Gudenus, the DAS-level head of African affairs in the Austrian Foreign Ministry's Bureau of Middle East and African Affairs.

2. (SBU) Gudenus noted that the EU Presidency had issued a statement referring to the EU election observer mission's comments of May 17 "concerning both positive aspects and reported irregularities, which will need to be looked into later." Gudenus pointed out that the statement said the election observer mission "will continue to monitor the remaining part of the electoral process." The statement went on to say that there will be a further official statement after the National Election Board has counted votes, and "any other declaration on the results is therefore premature."

3. (C) Gudenus said the EU's election observer mission did not have a mandate to observe the National Election Board's investigations into election complaints. However, the EU election observer mission and EU diplomats in Addis Ababa were working with both the government and the opposition to push the democratic process forward. In this connection, Gudenus said the EU was playing a mediating role between the government and opposition, and held the first meeting in this capacity on May 28. She noted further that the presence of Javier Solana and Louis Michel in Addis Ababa was a strong indication of the EU's interest in the Ethiopian electoral process.

4. (SBU) Gudenus asked that we continue to consult as our thinking develops on how to address the situation in Ethiopia. Brown